

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For More Information Contact

Heather Funkhouser, Director, Injury Prevention (804) 864-7738

Shannon Wright, PIO (804) 864-7741

Sept. 14, 2005

VDH 05-18

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH OFFERS CHILD SAFETY SEATS TO ASSIST CHILDREN DISPLACED BY HURRICANE KATRINA

(RICHMOND, Va.)—The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is offering free child safety seats for eligible children relocating to Virginia due to Hurricane Katrina. The child safety seats are available to relocated children through Virginia's low income safety seat distribution and education program until February 2006.

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury and death in the United States, and Virginia law requires that all children under the age of 6 be properly secured in a child safety seat. VDH's safety seat program distributes child safety seats to Virginia families who could otherwise not afford them. VDH is expanding the program and waiving certain requirements for Gulf state residents displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

"VDH would like to contribute to the long-term safety of these children who are moving into Virginia because of the impacts of Hurricane Katrina," said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H. "These parents and young children have already been through so much. With the other concerns and expenses facing them as they rebuild their lives, these relocated families can use our help to ensure their children are transported safely."

VDH purchases the child safety seats using revenues from fines assessed to those who violate Virginia's child passenger safety seat law. Approximately 50,000 safety seats have been distributed to Virginia residents since 1996 at more than 130 distribution sites statewide.

Katrina survivors are eligible for a free child safety seat if they meet the following qualifications:

- Applicant must be the parent, legal guardian or foster parent of the child
- Applicant may apply no earlier than in the last trimester of pregnancy
- The child must be 3 years old or younger and must be within safety seat manufacturer's weight/height guidelines
- Applicant must attend a safety seat installation and use class and sign a waiver of liability

Virginia residents applying for the program must additionally meet the following requirements:

- Must be a legal resident of Virginia
- Must be Medicaid eligible or meet certain income requirements

To learn how to apply for the low income safety seat distribution and education program and to find a local distribution site, visit www.safetysseatva.org or call (800) 732-8333, Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

###